/23 cont'd/

133 become especially skilled in hunting. At the same time, the
221 mountain slopes are very well suited to animal husbandry. Owing to the lack of streams, however, fishing is rather negligible. In general, agriculture—tilling the mountain slopes—remains the
[224] chief aspect of their economic life. Hunting is also very important and, to a lesser extent, animal husbandry, while fishing is of no importance. Their economic life is thus entirely conditioned by geographic factors. We shall discuss this in the following sections.

2. Agriculture

241 There are two different methods of agriculture adopted by the Miao, cultivating level fields and planting the mountain slopes. As we have mentioned before, there is a good deal of mountainous land and few level fields. Therefore, the planting of mountain slopes is the chief /24/ form of agriculture while the cultivation of level rice fields is only secondary.

The work of planting the mountain slopes usually begins in the second month of the lunar year. First, they cut down the trees; then they cease working for a short period to allow the branches to be dried by the sun, after which they burn them; the ashes remaining are a natural fertilizer. Subsequently, they sow the seed in holes dug by spades and hoes. The main crop they cultivate is rice grown on dry land. Corn and beans are also raised on a large scale.
● [242] After the seeds are sown, they neither fertilize nor irrigate, and only after the crops are grown is any weeding done. The eighth or ninth month of the same year is usually the time of harvest.

243 Their method of cultivating their level rice fields is almost the
[171] same as that of the Chinese. Cultivation usually begins in early spring. Their tools consist of ploughs and harrows which are drawn
[231] by oxen. Their method of sowing and transplanting the rice sprouts is also the same as the Chinese. However, they pay little attention to fertilizing, irrigation, and weeding. The wet rice fields can be cultivated and harvested twice a year. The first period is from the first month to the fifth month of the lunar year; the second period from the sixth to the ninth month. With dry fields there is

[132 cont.]

443 Even today they do not have a single market fair within the area and this shows how circumscribed is the sphere of their economic activity. Their only means of livelihood is agriculture. Almost 243 all the fields are terraced according to natural topography, rising from the bottom of the slope to the top in several hundred layers. The shape of the field is long and narrow, producing rice, wheat, corn and barley. These terraced fields are not fertile [242] and the Sheng Miao do not know how to apply fertilizer. Further- [132] more, the temperature in the whole area is very low, and a plentiful harvest is not possible. The proverb says that "when the soil is barren, the people must be poor." Although the 511 Sheng Miao toil all year round in the hard struggle for survival, they can only eke out a bare existence. Being in direct contact with them, the writer could watch at close quarters their extremely miserable conditions, which are pitiable indeed. Because of their ignorance they do not know how to save or to improve the method of production. In case of famine they cannot escape starvation, [133] which is the most important reason for the decrease in their population.

105 In our study of the Miao culture we find it varies with different ethnic units and localities, each having its peculiar traits. The distinguishing features of the Sheng Miao, who differ a great deal from the other tribes, are as follows:

1. Ignorant and straightforward, they are easily duped. They are ready to proclaim themselves "kings" and to create disturbances.

2. The men are black in complexion, red-eyed, dishevelled, and tall and big in stature.

3. Up to this day not a single one of them can talk fluent Chinese.

4. There are peculiar styles of costumes for men and women.

5. Their staple food is glutinous rice, supplemented by raw meat, raw blood, bees, locusts, centipedes, earthworms, tree worms, sand worms, water worms, mountain rats and lizards.

6. The women are fond of smoking leaf tobacco.

/VIII cont./

286 Ill. 88. Weaving the spun material made from hemp. Portable horizontal loom with treadle device. The warp is stretched with the help of a belt around the loins. The woman at the loom is just about to strike home the sword (cf. Ill. 89).

Ill. 89. The weaver is making preparations for the woof. The shuttle is carved out of wood. The inserted bobbin, around which the hemp thread is wound, is made of bamboo. The stick that separates the two layers of thread is made out of the same material.

283 Ill. 90. Spinning machine. With its help, four threads, which the woman doing the spinning holds in her left hand, are twisted together. By means of the little stick in her right hand, she prevents the threads from becoming tangled. She turns the flywheel with both feet.

Ills. 91-96. The harvest.

262 [244] Ill. 91. The ripe squash at the edge of the fields of mountain rice are gathered. The juicy, tart meat of the raw fruit is especially tasty in the great heat.

243 Ill. 92. The stalks of the mountain rice are cut individually, with the help of the small crescent-shaped harvesting knife, about 30 centimeters below the ear and then bundled. The straw is left standing in the fields and rots.

Ill. 93. Bringing in the harvest. Each member of the family loads himself with as many bundles of ears in carriers and baskets as he can carry. Then there is a walk for hours over the narrow mountain paths to the village. [484] The men carry in their hands the crossbows with arrows in place ready to shoot.

/IX/

252 256 Ill. 94. Peculiar mills of the Meau. The lower-millstone half is fixed, the upper part is eccentrically attached to a horizontal pole. When the latter is swing back and forth, the movable-millstone half turns. A hole is chiseled in the top of it, through which the grain is poured in. According to whether the wooden axle which connects

/IX cont./

252 256 the two millstone halves with each other is lengthened or shortened, it is possible to hull the rice or maize kernels or to grind them into coarser or finer flour.

243 [412] Ill. 95. Rice-harvesting knife of the Meau. It consists of a semicircular wooden handle with an inserted metal blade. A string over the back of the hand provides the necessary firmness. The photograph clearly shows how the implement is held. The ears are cut individually, row after row. Because of the manual dexterity of the Meau, the harvesting nevertheless proceeds rapidly.

Ill. 96. Part of the rice is hulled in the field. A hole carved in a felled giant of the primeval forest forms the container. The pestle is fastened to a crosspole and is set in motion when one steps on the shorter lever. The axis of the lever arm is fastened between the upright wooden posts.

Ills. 97-103. Religion and magic.

778 Ill. 97. Sacral sign that the shaman sets up in front of the doors of the houses as a sign of a holiday.

787 Ill. 98. Stick oracle. A number of questions are addressed to the spirits. Each bamboo stick signifies a question. All the sticks are bent in a special manner. The answer of the spirits is signified by the position of the upper edge of the bend.

755 787 [756] Ill. 99. Calling back a lost soul. The shaman (left) has thrown oracle horns (the tips of gaur horns) on the ground. Only if these come to rest in a certain way does it mean that the spirits are willing to appear. The magic rattle is on the bench in the foreground. In the background squats the father of the patient, beside whom, on the beam, is the patient, whose soul "has fled beyond the clouds."

[782] Ill. 100. Continuation of the ceremony from Ill. 99. The invoked spirits have given the order to dig a pit in the floor of the house and then to burn spirit-money. The lost soul of the patient is urged to enter the pit. It is then closed with a stone and the soul, it is believed, is caught.

/IX cont./

231 Ill. 101. The dog is a beloved friend of the Meau. They believe that the soul of a dead dog plays a role in the other world, in the realm of the spirits, similar to the one it plays in the life of men. The throat of a newborn dog is cut so that it, as a guardian, will protect the house against sickness and evil spirits.

756 789 Ill. 102. Exorcising evil spirits by means of the shaman (right) and his assistant. The former is holding a burning torch, into which he throws gunpowder held in readiness by the assistant. The leaping flame, the smoke, and the stench are supposed to drive away the evil spirits.

231 782 Ill. 103. Before being slaughtered, the pig is purchased from the spirits by burning spirit-money representing the value of the animal under the snout of the animal.

Ills. 104-108. Houses and settlement.

343 243 482 Ill. 104. Work-hut in a rice field. In the left foreground, the typical Meau carrier.

/XI

342 [415] Ill. 105. Simple dwelling of the Meau, with walls and doors made of halved bamboo tubes. Beside the entrance stand long bamboo tubes with the partitioning walls pushed out, which serve as water containers.

353 [264] [354] Ill. 106. Flash-light photograph in the interior of a house of the White Meau. The family having a meal. In the background on the right, the mud hearth with the Chinese iron kettle. Household utensils hang down along the walls and from the ceiling of the storage loft.

622 [264] [352] Ill. 107. A chief of the Black Meau in his dwelling at mealtime. The furniture is peculiar, differing basically from that of the Chinese and showing a striking resemblance to the furniture of the mountain peasants in the Alps. In the foreground on the right, the oldest son; to the left, two daughters of the chief. Various kitchen utensils are hanging on the house wall.